

# the ACTION reporter

American Council To Improve Our Neighborhoods

Volume II, No. 9

June, 1958

## Meeting To Seek Break-Through In Urban Decay



**ATLANTA NEXT.** . . . With six Regional Urban Renewal Clinics behind it, ACTION is now planning to hold a Southeastern Urban Renewal Clinic in Atlanta, Georgia, in September. Details will be announced later. The city attendance score of the clinics held thus far runs as follows: St. Louis, Missouri, May 1956, 46 cities represented; Cambridge, Mass., November 1956, 44 cities; Dayton, Ohio, March 1957, 64 cities; New York, September 1957, 74 cities; Berkeley, Calif., October 1957, 75 cities, and Dallas, Texas, May 1958, 85 cities. (ACTION map by educational program division.)

### Philadelphia's "Land Bank" Program Gives New Life to Old Industrial Areas

**Philadelphia, Pa.**—This city has a "land bank" program which is bringing new industrial life to blighted and slum areas.

Under the program, the city transfers city-owned lands to its Redevelopment Authority for sale to industries. Money from the sale goes into a special revolving fund and is used by the city to buy new sites in areas marked for future industrial development in the city's comprehensive plan.

Observers see the following advantages in the plan:

- Philadelphia keeps a close check on sites available. Many cities have not made an overall appraisal of how much land they have.

- The Redevelopment Authority, free from State Constitution requirements for sale by public auction, can sell land quickly.

- It can make certain that any sale is made only to bona fide developers with definite plans and construction agreements—thus eliminating the possibility of land speculators holding the land and making windfall profits.

(The city means to sell the sites at a reasonable price and is more concerned with the quality of the concern and the employment potential of the operation)

(Continued on page 2)

#### Report Card on U.S. Colleges

June is the month when colleges grade their students. For a report on how the colleges themselves rate—in the area of urban renewal—turn to page 3. You'll find an informal survey on what a dozen colleges and universities are doing on behalf of a revitalization program for American cities.

#### Newark Chosen as Site of 1959 ACTION Conference

ACTION will join forces with The Newark Economic Development Committee in sponsoring a three-day national meeting next May for the purpose of initiating a major break-through in America's problems of urban decay.

The May 4-6, 1959, conference will be held in Newark, N.J., and will bring together 500 outstanding leaders in business, labor and government.

The theme and title of the conference is to be *Action for Better Communities* and will be based on findings of ACTION's Ford Foundation research studies into local urban renewal planning.

H. Bruce Palmer, president of the Mutual Benefit Life Insurance Co., is chairman of the Newark committee which was appointed two years ago by Mayor Leo P. Carlini to revitalize the physical, economic and cultural aspects of Newark.

#### Newark Called Case No. 1

According to James E. Lash, ACTION executive vice president, Newark was chosen as the site of the conference because it seemed to the members of ACTION's executive committee that Newark could be considered "Case City Number One" with respect to urban renewal problems and methods of solving those problems.

Said Mr. Lash: "Newark started its renewal program five years ago from one of the worst situations that could possibly exist, and now has a balanced program of redevelopment under way encompassing commercial, industrial and residential property."

The ACTION research studies have been going on for two years under the direction of ACTION's research committee chaired by Ferd Kramer, president, Draper & Kramer. Staff director of the committee is Martin Meyerson, a vice president of ACTION and director of the Center for Urban Studies at Harvard. The results of the studies are being published in six volumes entitled "ACTION's series on Housing and Community Development." Announcement will be made in ACTION Reporter when copies are available.

# Citizen Help In Four-Year Housing Betterment Campaign Brings Results

New Orleans, La.—The City Division of Housing Improvement here has tallied up results of a four-year housing betterment campaign which was aided by a citizens' advisory committee.

One quarter of 12,213 dwelling units inspected were found to be substandard. The remainder had varying numbers of violations.

Of the substandard units, 7,084 were vacated, demolished or brought up to standard, according to a report from past committee chairman Clifford P. Favrot, who is a member of ACTION's board of directors. He said work was in progress on 3,357 units with 1,772 units awaiting action.

Detailing a wide variety of improvements made, Mr. Favrot said:

"The effect of these improvements, aside from the overall enhancements of the appearance of the city and the betterment of the health and comfort of the people affected, produced substantial income to the city in the form of fees for permits, licenses and sales taxes on materials used."

He pointed out that increased electrical inspections paid off handsomely with the National Board of Underwriters refraining from ordering an increase in fire insurance rates.

Mr. Favrot—who has turned over committee leadership to Walter Barnett—says that a frustrating legal problem was caused by laws which call for minimum housing standards but which permit no action against substandard commercial buildings.

His summary on the effect of the Housing Improvement Division's four-year effort:

## PHILADELPHIA— from page 1

than with an immediate profit from the land.)

● Industries in Philadelphia are finding it possible to obtain attractive sites with all needed utilities installed.

The program took seven years of talking and study to come into operation. Since 1957 more than 1,000 acres of city-owned land in industrial zoned areas have been earmarked for possible sale. The city has appropriated \$37,000 for planning and study to carry out the program.

A second phase is to set up a non-profit corporation financed by the city and the business community to advise and assist the Redevelopment Authority in the preparation of sites and selection of tenants or buyers.

For further information write to Francis J. Lamm, executive director, Redevelopment Authority of Philadelphia, 1818 Rittenhouse Square, Philadelphia 3.

"The program has stimulated voluntary housing improvements in the buffer neighborhoods bordering rehabilitation areas and elsewhere in the city as is evidenced by the rapidly increasing number of housing improvement permits being issued. During the first half of 1957, these amounted to almost four times the number of permits issued for new housing."

For more information write to Col. Shelton P. Hubbard, chief, Division of Housing Improvement, Room 1W06, City Hall, New Orleans.

## Firemen With Know-How Rush Housing Inspection

Cambridge, Mass.—Faced with the need to get information—and fast—for its Cambridgeport renewal project eligibility report to the HBFA, the Cambridge Redevelopment Authority turned to local firemen.

Off-duty fire fighters were enlisted to do an initial housing survey. They had all done inspection work before and the Authority thinks their know-how will expedite this phase of the work.

For more information, write to John E. Connolly, executive director, Cambridge Redevelopment Authority, City Hall Annex, 57 Innis Street, Cambridge, Mass.

## Partnership Urged In Road-City Planning

"Urban planning should be a full-time partner in the urban highway program," says Joseph E. Ehlers, assistant commissioner for Technical Standards and Services, Urban Renewal Administration.

In an article "Urban Renewal and Its Relationship to the National Road Program," he tells how the Urban Renewal Administration and the Bureau of Public Roads are already cooperating to coordinate highways and urban renewal in a manner to make better cities.

Mr. Ehlers points out that his office notifies the Bureau of Public Roads of each urban renewal project approved for planning. Regional offices furnish the bureau's regional offices with descriptions and maps of each project.

Three phases of coordination between the two programs are seen as: physical planning (inspection of a new highway into an urban renewal project might completely alter proposed land uses), schedule and timing (one agency acquires land and improves it and any other agency acquiring adjacent land at a later date may have to pay a higher price for it), and field operating problems (possible joint acquisition of land, different portions of which would be used by the two agencies.)

The article appeared in the April issue of THE MUNICIPAL SOUTH, P.O. Box 1225, Charlotte 1, North Carolina.

## ORGANIZATIONS IN RENEWAL

*Below is a statement by a national organization whose activities bear on urban renewal. The group's program, aims and resources available to local groups working for neighborhood and community improvement are listed.*

**NERSICA, Inc. (National Established Repair, Service & Improvement Contractors Association)** is a national group which works on the local, state and national level to maintain fair trade practices in the interest of the contractor and the public.

Members include dealers, contractors and applicators of such products as roofing, siding, insulation, combination storm windows and doors, metal awnings, cupolas, porch enclosures, ornamental iron and other accessories for home exteriors and home alteration work.

Through city, area and state-wide councils, the organization has worked for the maintenance of high ethical standards in an industry which has seen the advent of many new products since World War II. On the state level especially, NERSICA has fought for the passage of laws pertaining to the restriction of bait advertising and to discourage "fast-back operators."

In Washington, NERSICA national directors have worked closely with the

Federal Housing Administration to insure the continuation and passage of Title I and Title II legislation which would assure the availability of funds to underwrite the cost of financing home improvements. They have also appeared before Senate and House committee meetings to urge legislation that would encourage the trend toward better home maintenance, repair and improvement.

NERSICA works closely with local and national Better Business Bureaus, Chambers of Commerce and business organizations aimed at maintaining high standards of operation.

Through its monthly **Bulletin** and at its annual **National Home Improvement Exposition**, NERSICA directs attention to the efforts being made to give the public the best products for the money, with the best application procedures.

For more information on the activities of NERSICA and the location of local chapters, write to NERSICA, Inc., 12 East 41st Street, New York 17, New York.

# Report: Colleges Give Lift to Urban Renewal

American colleges and universities are making a valuable contribution to the field of urban renewal.

Several institutions of higher learning are providing a variety of programs. The majority of these are aimed at giving planners a chance to review current planning techniques and to delve broadly into renewal problems.

"These roles seem to be emerging for colleges and universities," says Leo Molinaro, director of the ACTION educational program. "These concern research, training and civic education—research on basic urban problems, training of professional planners and technicians and civic education for local leaders."

Prominent in the research field is **Harvard University's Center for Urban Studies** headed by Martin Meyerson, who is also a vice president and director of ACTION's research program.

## Cleans Own Neighborhood

Approaching renewal from another angle, the **University of Chicago** is carrying on an ambitious program of area renewal in its own neighborhood. According to a report from Chancellor Laurence A. Kimpton, the university has destroyed 48 acres of slum and blight in the area around its campus and has started an extensive program to protect additional acres.

The university has spent \$5,325,000 of its own money in acquiring buildings—then demolishing or rehabilitating them. This program is made possible through an Illinois law which provides for the establishment of Neighborhood Redevelopment Corporations with powers of eminent domain in specific areas where they represent at least 60 per cent of the land area either by purchase, option or ascent of the property owners.

Dr. Kimpton has said that some twenty institutions of higher learning are now involved in slum clearance. But he pointed out:

"... the amount of public funds is inadequate and must be supplemented by private resources."

## Clinics and Institutes

Reports from other universities:

In Nashville, Tenn., the first annual two-day Urban Renewal and Housing Clinic sponsored by **Tennessee Agricultural and Industrial State University** has been completed. The well-attended meeting brought together top industry representatives, personnel from local housing authorities having "workable programs" and lay leaders from Tennessee, Kentucky and Virginia. It stressed what urban renewal is, how it works, relocation problems, FHA programs of assistance and focused a good deal of attention on the problem of minority group housing.



**BARNARD COLLEGE** in New York City is one of the many institutions of higher learning around the nation involved in urban renewal. It is a member of **Morningside Heights Inc.**, which is made up of 14 educational, religious, health and cultural institutions located on a high point overlooking the Hudson River on Manhattan's West Side. Working together, the institutions are helping in the redevelopment of nearly 40 acres. Write to ACTION for a report on the project.

Also in the South, **The Georgia Institute of Technology** in Atlanta holds a two-weeks' Urban Planning Institute each summer aimed at members of the staffs of planning commissions who have had inadequate planning training or who wish a refresher course. Last summer's Institute concentrated on the workable program requirements of the Housing Act of 1954.

For more information, write to Prof. Howard K. Merwinick, Regents' Professor of city planning at Georgia Tech, one of the organizers of the Institute.

From Ithaca, New York, comes a report on the first annual conference on City Planning sponsored by the **Organization of Cornell Planners**, a newly formed body of graduate students and alumni of the Department of City and Regional Planning at the university. The conference had as its theme "Training the Urban Renewal Team." and was sponsored in collaboration with the College of Architecture's Department of City and

Regional Planning and the Sears-Roebuck Foundation.

The object of the Cornell meeting was to stimulate interest in both academic and professional circles in renewal as one of the major areas of contemporary planning. For more information, write to **Rudolph H. Knight**, Organization of Cornell Planners, College of Architecture, Cornell University, Ithaca, New York.

From the **Massachusetts Institute of Technology** comes news of the twentieth in a series of annual two-week special summer programs in City and Regional Planning to be held July 21 through August 1 at the MIT School of Architecture and Planning. The program is open to professional planners and people in related fields who have a specific interest in comprehensive planning.

Special emphasis will be placed on problems and techniques common to metropolitan and suburban planning agencies in coping with urban expansion and suburban growth.

For additional information on MIT's programs, write to **Roland B. Greeley**, associate professor of regional planning, MIT, School of Architecture and Planning, 77 Massachusetts Avenue, Cambridge 39, Mass.

**Columbia's New York School of Social Work** has planned in 1958 program of institutes and workshops for practicing social workers to include a two-week institute on the role of research in community planning.

The **University of Illinois'** Small Homes Council is planning its fifth annual short course to serve the interests of the home financing and appraising field.

## Grant and Degree

A \$756,950 grant to **Michigan State University** to establish an Institute of Community Development has been announced by the W. K. Kellogg Foundation. The grant will help the Institute provide counsel and guidance to Michigan communities on problems created by growth and population shifts.

The **College of Liberal Arts of Wayne State University** (Detroit, Michigan) in cooperation with the College of Engineering and the School of Business Administration now offers graduate training leading to the degree of Master of Urban Planning. The program is closely coordinated with the current projects of the Detroit City Plan Commission and the Detroit Metropolitan Area Regional Planning Commission.

And at **Syracuse University**, the Adult Education Division is offering a summer course titled "Intergovernmental Administration, Onondaga County—community planning, housing and related problems."

# Reading for renewal

Atlanta's Charles F. Palmer, organizer and director of the first Federal slum clearance project and a member of ACTION's board of directors, is the author of "Adventures of a Slum Fighter," called by one critic "a story rather than a discussion."

This businessman's adventures tell what other countries have been doing for years, of what this nation has done and of the job of renewal that lies ahead.

(The \$4 book may be purchased at a 25% discount from Tapper and Love, Inc., P.O. Box 5109, Atlanta 2, Georgia.)

Chattanooga, Tenn., has put out a booklet, "Urban Renewal Is Everybody's Business," which tells what urban renewal is, when it was first officially recognized by the Federal government, what the tools are, what Chattanooga's problem is and how citizens can help.

(Available free from the Chattanooga Housing Authority, Chattanooga, Tennessee. Address your request to Robert Barker, director of urban renewal.)

Even though suburban shopping centers have convenience on their side, downtown shopping centers still have what it takes to stimulate the effort of densing up and coming to town, says Albert M. Greenfield. He is chairman of the board of the Bankers Securities Corp. of Philadelphia and former chairman of that city's Planning Commission. A talk on "Downtown and Shopping Centers" delivered before the International Council of Shopping Centers stresses the importance of keeping the downtown a vital core.

(Available free from John O'Shea, Bank-

ers Securities Corp., Bankers Securities Building, Philadelphia, Pa.)

The Housing Authority of Little Rock, Arkansas, has two booklets of interest. One, "Relocation Case Histories," is a relocation scrapbook, a picture story of one of the important benefits resulting from an urban renewal project. It shows pictures of homes in which families lived before relocation and where they live now. Captions tell family income, old and new rent and level of neighborhood.

(Available free from the Housing Authority of the City of Little Rock, 121 East Second Street, Little Rock, Arkansas.)

The second booklet is a Final Project Report on Little Rock's Livestock Show Area urban renewal project. Little Rock's fourth project to reach the loan and grant stage. This project is the second federally assisted, predominantly rehabilitation project to be approved for loan and grant in the country.

The intensive presentation, which received praise from Urban Renewal Administration officials, details the project area, the execution of the urban renewal plan, the rehabilitation plan, land acquisition, controls and standards, relationship to local objectives, other provisions necessary to meet state and local requirements, and numerous maps showing zoning plans, power and communication lines, water main adjustments and other planned adjustments and land use plans.

(Available for \$3 per single copy from Knox Banner, executive director, Housing Authority of the City of Little Rock, 121 East Second, Little Rock, Arkansas.)

Page 2 of a brochure titled "Residential Redevelopment" shows a year 1900 crowd bidding for 25-foot lots scattered throughout the city of Richmond, California.

The results of this cutting-up of the city into small lots is traced. In the following years, these new landowners spread over the face of the earth. Subsequent developers found their hands tied. Richmond's first step toward resident redevelopment was The Plaza, a development offering three different types of houses, which tested 1) the legality and financial feasibility of redevelopment, 2) the practicality of new housing types and 3) the level of local housing market demand.

(Available for \$1 per single copy from William M. Marx, planning director, City Planning Commission, City Hall, Richmond, California.)

Columbia, South Carolina, has begun attacking its slum problem on a neighborhood basis rather than a city-wide one because of the magnitude of its rehabilitation needs. The accomplishments of one year's work are outlined and explained in "Columbia: Annual Report, 1956-1957, Urban Rehabilitation Commission," a report which won for the city an award from the National Association of Housing and Redevelopment Officials for its superior value in interpreting its program to its citizens.

(Available free from William K. Marsh, director urban rehabilitation, City Hall, Columbia, South Carolina.)

Charlottesville, West Virginia, is one of 22 cities to which the Continental Can Company has presented a print of the film, "Man of ACTION." Prints went to cities where the company's major operations are located.

## ACTION

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